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WHO KILLED DANNY CASOLARO?

Ing, published a collection of short stories, wrote an initial film treatment titled *Rain for a Dusty Summer*, and collaborated on *To Fly Without Wings*, a film about Arabian racehorses in Egypt that was narrated by Orson Welles (Casolaro loved horses, and during his marriage he kept them at his place in Fairfax). Among his papers—several boxes of which are now in the custody of ABC's *Nightline*—are large folders stuffed with documents, including press clippings, xeroxed memorandums, and notebooks. But his notebooks are not like those of most other reporters. In them, bits of information on the Octopus are interspersed with snatches of poetry and brief character sketches for short stories.

In early 1990, Casolaro sold his interest in the Computer Age company. That summer Terry Miller, an editor at a computer newsletter and a friend of Casolaro's, suggested that Casolaro might start to look into the Inslaw case. Inslaw is a software company run by a former National Security Agency employee, Bill Hamilton, and his wife, Nancy. The Hamiltons, who hail from St. Louis, had spent the 1970s developing a uniquely powerful software called Promis for the Justice Department. Promis was supposed to allow a U.S. attorney's office to track any individual prosecution at any time through the maze of the justice system—by pressing a key, you could find out prior convictions, known associates, the status of appeals, or virtually anything that might have a bearing on the adjudication of a case.

Hamilton had started working on the software with a grant from the Justice Department, but when the program that funded his research ended, he took his company private and negotiated a lucrative \$6 million deal to install Promis in prosecutors' offices around the country.

But for reasons that seemed inscrutable at the time, the Justice Department, then headed by Edwin Meese, never paid Inslaw for Promis—instead, it engaged in what appeared to be a conscious effort to drive the Hamiltons into bankruptcy. But Inslaw nevertheless won two judgments from federal courts in 1988 and 1989 that required the government to make restitution—before the case was thrown out by the U.S. Court of Appeals on grounds it had been tried in the wrong court. The Hamiltons are appealing to the Supreme Court.

In 1989, Bill Hamilton got a call from Jeff Steinberg, a longtime top aide in the Lyndon LaRouche organization. The LaRouchies had ties to the Reagan White House and have long run a surprisingly elaborate intelligence-gathering operation of their own, but that year the law had caught up with LaRouche, and he was sent to prison for conspiracy, tax evasion, and mailfraud. Steinberg told Hamilton that he knew someone in Seattle by the name of Michael Riconosciuto who had excellent national security intelligence not only on LaRouche's case but also on Inslaw's.

Riconosciuto told Hamilton that Ed Meese had taken Promis and allegedly given it to one of his cronies, Earl W. Brian, who served as Reagan's secretary of health while he was governor of California, and later became head of United Press International. According to Riconosciuto, Brian then sold Promis to police forces—including secret police—around the world, from South Korea to Israel to Iraq. The same qualities that made Promis ideal for tracking criminals in the U.S. courts made it perfect for keeping tabs on terrorists or, needless to say, political dissidents. As Riconosciuto claimed to have adapted it, the software could then operate as a kind of computer network bug—anything the security apparatus that used Promis knew, the U.S. could know, simply by linking up over the telephone.

Almost at once, Hamilton says, he told Casolaro about Riconosciuto. Casolaro's phone records indicate he spent many hours in conversation with Riconosciuto, and Casolaro's friends say that for several months in late 1990, Casolaro talked of little else.

The 30-year-old Riconosciuto is—to put it mildly—a colorful character, wilder than anything in *The Falcon and the Snowman*. He was a gifted child: When he was just 10 years old, Michael wired his parents' neighborhood with a working, private telephone system that undercut Ma Bell; in the eighth grade, he won a science fair with a model for a three-dimensional sonar system. By the time he was a teenager, he had won so many science fairs with exhibits of laser technology that he was invited to be a summer research assistant at Stanford's prestigious Cooper Vapor Laser Laboratory. Dr. Arthur Schalow, a Nobel laureate, remembers him even now. "You don't forget a 16-year-old youngster who shows up with his own argon laser," he told Casolaro.

In 1973, Riconosciuto had been sentenced by a federal judge in Seattle to two years in prison for the manufacture of psychedelic drugs and jumping bail. At the

"The Washington State Patrol could give a shit about Wackenhut, the Cabazons, Iran-contra, Inslaw, the October Surprise, Satanists. . . This is a righteous dope bust."

time, his father testified that Michael was engaged in "underwater research" and had discussed "using electronic means to clean up pollutants in water." The narcotics agents who arrested the young Riconosciuto said they'd had him under surveillance off and on since 1968.

Riconosciuto told Casolaro, as he had numerous other reporters before him, that after his release he had become research director for a joint venture between Wackenhut, the Coral Gables private security outfit, and the Cabazon Indian band of Indio, California, that was developing and manufacturing arms and other military matériel—including night-vision goggles, machine guns, and biological and chemical weapons—for export. Riconosciuto claimed that he had invented the fuel-air explosive; he also said he had encountered a variety of famous people, who dropped by the Cabazon reservation from time to time. For example, he claimed that he'd met the Jackal, the famous assassin; talked on the phone with Admiral Bobby Inman of the CIA; and even tape-recorded a secret meeting with William Casey at a Washington, D.C., country club (according to Riconosciuto, that tape was his insurance policy against getting bumped off by the big boys in the spook world). Riconosciuto went on to "reveal" that he was the man who had "pulled the plug" on the Nugan Hand bank, the Australian bank with CIA ties that collapsed in 1980; he also claimed to be an effective lobbyist on Capitol Hill, responsible for swinging five key votes to free up \$100 million for the secret contra war against the Sandinistas. Once, after lunch with then FBI director William Webster, he had laid plans to launder spook money through NASA.

This was all a bit much for the Hamiltons to take in, but the computer company owners listened with fascination and deep suspicion to his tales involving Promis. In an affidavit presented in federal court, Riconosciuto told them that Casey—who had been outside counsel to Wackenhut before joining the Reagan White House—had hired him and Brian, as employees of

Wackenhut, to carry out the October Surprise deal. Riconosciuto described how a Justice Department official had allegedly ordered him to modify Promis for use by the Canadian Royal Mounted Police. He claimed that Meese had rewarded Brian for his assistance during the October Surprise by giving him the software outright, which he could then sell at considerable profit around the world. (Brian has denied any connection to the Inslaw case.)

Casolaro and the Hamiltons thought Riconosciuto's tale was largely wacko, but they found certain things he told them to be true—particularly that the Wackenhut joint venture existed, and that the Mounties had apparently misappropriated Promis (the Canadian police have denied using Promis). They theorized that maybe Riconosciuto was using his contacts with the Hamiltons as leverage with other people who were threatening him: If his enemies didn't cooperate with Riconosciuto, then he would spill more and more secrets to Casolaro and the Hamiltons.

In April 1991, shortly after giving his affidavit in the Inslaw case, Riconosciuto was arrested for the manufacture and sale of methamphetamines in Washington state. He has been in jail since then, often claiming to be a "political prisoner." Over the Easter holiday that same month, Casolaro flew out to Tacoma, Washington, where Riconosciuto was being held. Casolaro recorded his impression of Riconosciuto's appearance in court: "Danger Man [Riconosciuto] filled the courtroom with his presence. Under six feet tall, he was immense in frame but agile and graceful in movement, like some giant white rabbit or perhaps some hybrid fugitive creature related to a fox."

"We couldn't really tell [Casolaro] much because it was a federal case and it was going to the grand jury," one Washington State Patrol detective explained. "But we told him the Washington State Patrol could give a shit about Wackenhut, the Cabazons, Iran-contra, Inslaw, the October Surprise, Satanists. I don't care if he had Bill Casey over for dinner in the desert, this is a righteous dope bust. Riconosciuto's a strange duck, and if you listen to this shit you're going to get in-a web and go crazy."

Riconosciuto had promised to give Casolaro a tape recording of a phone conversation with a high Justice Department official concerning the theft of the Promis software, but he explained that he had thrown the tape from his car window just before he was arrested. Casolaro spent fruitless hours tracking back and forth across the highway where Riconosciuto said he'd tossed the tape, but he never found it.

Casolaro wasn't alone in talking to Riconosciuto. He was joined by investigators from the House Judiciary Committee, who were also looking into the Inslaw case. "I'm screwed," Riconosciuto told Casolaro. "Don't you see? These guys are my only hope. I've come up with the cheapest way to refine platinum there is. But I'm screwed because they'll try to show that the chemicals I use at the mine are precursor ingredients for making methamphetamine."

By the time he returned to his Virginia home in late April, Casolaro was more than a little tired of Riconosciuto. "That guy is nuts," he told a journalist friend in Washington.

LaROUCHIES TO THE RESCUE

Despite his misgivings, Casolaro continued to pursue Riconosciuto's theories. In mid June 1991, Casolaro met with a member of the LaRouche organization in Washington. And all of a sudden the Octopus seemed to be very much alive.

"I met Casolaro at the House Judiciary committee hearings on Inslaw last December," wrote LaRouche sidekick Jeff Steinberg, in a memo to the LaRouche network dated August 14, 1991 (two days after Danny's death became public, and the same day that the West Virginia coroner pronounced Casolaro's death to be a likely suicide). On June 24, Steinberg wrote that he "spent

about four hours with Casolaro at his home...reviewing various leads on the Inslaw and related matters. We met later that same night for several more hours to exchange some specific documentation."

Casolaro's June phone records indicate several calls to LaRouche headquarters in Leesburg, Virginia, and his papers include a LaRouche "Memorandum for the Files"—documents that suggest Casolaro may have begun to see things much as they did. For one thing, Steinberg wrote that he arranged for a LaRouche source, known as CHIPS, to talk to Casolaro. Casolaro's notes identify this person as a former Customs agent now involved with the Treasury Department's enforcement work, and Steinberg speculates that CHIPS may have pointed Casolaro toward big-time drug rackets tied to the Gambino family. Steinberg's memo says that Casolaro had traced "the Inslaw and related stories back to a dirty CIA 'Old Boy' network" that had begun working together in the 1950s around the Albania covert operations. These men had gotten into the illegal gun and drug trade back then and had continued in that business ever since.

In short, Casolaro had stumbled into the vibrant mainstream of LaRouche thought. Most of this material has long been batted around on the conspiracy circuit. Casolaro's telephone records show him making repeated calls to old LaRouche favorites, including supposed drug dealers with ties to Gambino. Casolaro told friends, for example, that he had called E. Howard Hunt, who after first evidencing displeasure at getting a call on an unlisted number, became cordial, even effusive. Casolaro liked him.

Also in June, Casolaro phoned Martin Killian, *Der Spiegel's* Washington correspondent and one of the most persistent October Surprise investigators, to ask for the phone number of Roy Furmark, an oilman and former close associate of William Casey's. Killian refused. Casolaro then told Killian he had stumbled onto the Octopus, and that it had all started with James Jesus Angleton, the CIA spymaster who had spent most of his long career at the agency in counterintelligence, searching for potential KGB moles at Langley. Casolaro said a group associated with Angleton wanted revenge for an operation in Albania in the 1950s that had been burned by British double agent Kim Philby.

By now Casolaro was making pretty far-out telephone calls around the Washington journalistic community, making some reporters wonder whether he himself was a spook of some kind. He even contacted the *Voice*, asking to speak to its investigative reporters.

Meanwhile, in their attempts to check out Riconosciuto's stories, the Hamiltons had located Robert Booth Nichols, a Los Angeles businessman Riconosciuto had worked with on the Cabazon project. The son of a prominent Los Angeles surgeon, Nichols is the inventor of a submachine pistol that he says is superior to the MAC-10; he is a handsome, dashing figure, frequently described as "Clark Gable without the ears." There has been speculation about Nichols's criminal associations, which he has denied. Nichols gave the Hamiltons a copy of a civil suit he filed in Los Angeles against the FBI for alleging, in an FBI report on an Australian company controlled by Nichols, that the company was involved in a confidence scheme and that certain officers had ties to the Gambino crime family and Japan's criminal syndicate, the Yakuza. The Hamiltons were talking regularly to Nichols, and they passed his name on to Casolaro.

Casolaro's phone bills to Nichols grew in direct proportion to his disillusionment with Riconosciuto, and on July 10, 1991, Casolaro met Nichols at the posh Four Seasons hotel in Washington, D.C. To lure a girlfriend to the meeting, Casolaro touted Nichols as the president of the Bechtel Corporation just in from Kuwait. Once at the Four Seasons, Nichols dropped hints of something big about to happen on the Ca-

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GWM 32, 5'10, 130, ATTRACTIVE
YOUTHFUL, BROWN HAIR/EYES:
SENSE OF HUMOR LIKES ART & MOVIES.
YOU: GWM 26-32 SIMILAR HEIGHT &
WEIGHT ASIAN OR BLONDE A +.
7003

GWM 32 5'10 140 cute literary type,
with dark hair and eyes, seeks short
slim GWM 18-28 to be my Little Kiwi.
Letter to Box VMV8163, photo
returned, or 9342.

GWM 32 6' 185 very handsome brown/
brown, masculine, straight acting,
discreet clean cut handsome barefoot
guy for sports friendship flirts. hiking
road trips & other male bonding rituals.
Call 7015

GWM 32, 6'3, 200, WASP head-turner.
Artist, sober, secure, healthy. Loves ski
slopes, tennis, sailing, horse shows and
more. Welcomes only head-turner for
male bonding a la Symposium/Leaves
of Grass/Parting Glances. 7412

GWM, 32, blond/blue 150 5'10 Preppy,
love theater, movies, and quiet times.
Shy & inexperienced, looking for sincere
and honest. North Jersey and 20-30
a+. Letter to POB 361 Ridgewood, NJ
07451 or call 7337

GWM 33 5'10 155 drk-brown hair/eyes
olive. Handsome w/great body, better
mind seeks in-shape, sincere & regular
guy like myself who enjoys theater
beach travel gym. Prefer letter/photo/ph
POB 1182 NYC 10276 or 7211

GWM 34 5'8", good looking, masculine,
witty, warm, sincere prof'l w/broad in-
terests, seeks younger (21-33) guy
who is also "Rare Find" to share great
times. Life hair/eyes a plus. 7715

GWM 34 5'9 160 good looking healthy
NJ professional, warm, down to earth
with great friends but missing a similar
GWM 24-34 who is also not into bars &
is seeking a selective, special guy.
Write Box VMV8183 or 9349

GWM, 34, 5'9, 195, 11 bmn/grn. Healthy,
prof, enjoys photography, the arts, film,
travel, swimming, outdoors & the city.
Regular Guy seeks sim to develop seri-
ous relation. No drugs. PO Box 3842,
Jersey City, NJ 07303-3814

GWM 34, 6', 200, goodlooking football
players built. If romance, old movies &
cuddling are a turn on let's talk. Seeks
shorter affectionate very muscular guy
Latin & Italian a plus whos also seek-
ing that certain someone. 7741

GWM, 34, 6'2, 200 lbs, brown hair,
green eyes, mustache, handsome,
healthy, HIV+. Likes: cars, cats,
B-movies, Pee Wee. Dislikes: disco-
drugs, clones, show-tunes. Seeks: cute
GM with similar interests. 7476

GWM, 34, very good looking, and suc-
cessful, easy going with great sense of
humor 5'10, 158, blk hair, hazel eyes,
works out regularly seeks very muscu-
lar, friendly, frisky guy. ext 7419

GWM, 35, 5'10", 158 lbs,
Mediterranean looks, brwn/brwn,
honestly good looking, muscular, masc,
employed, profess'l, comfortably gay &
healthy, looking for similar 26-38 yrs, for
friendship, fun, & true monogamous
relationship if match is right. You should
be good-looking, & muscular, or in good
shape. I enjoy arts, gym, sex, (a lot).
Big smile, big hugs & big heart a definite
turn-on. Pls no fannies, tats, drugs,
bars, or bisexuals. Call or write. Photo
appreciated but not required.
Box VMV8235 or 9389

GWM 35 5'6 132 blue/hazel like to
meet GM straight acting & masculine
25-35 slim, no drugs inexperienced.
Prefer athletic guy to share interest in
sports music movies. Friends 1st. Note/
foto POBox 941 NYC 10469 or 7077

GWM 35, 5'6, 175, Italian, masculine,
holry, seeks older GWM, construction
worker, trucker, husky, masculine-type
for friendship. Prefer you write to:
PO Box 2433, Clifton, NJ 07015
or 7336

GWM, 35, 5'8, Italian, handsome,
successful, straight acting & well
adjusted. I know how to live & love,
one person at a time. Seeks-similar
fun loving, masculine GWM, for
monogamous relationship. Call 7047

GWM, 35, 6'3, 165, believes that life's
meaning must be sought within the
heart, interested in an honest respectful
sharing of life, with a man of uncon-
mon intelligence & sensitivity, a man
who can love deeply and is not afraid to
be vulnerable, an attractive and accom-
plished but need to be loved and under-
stood in a more complex way. 7863

GWM 35 handsome Italian bodybuilder
6'2 205 lbs brown eyes/hair crewcut
mustache romantic passionate earthy.
Let's get together, maybe forever. Seek
vibrant male 25+ who means business,
short hair a +. Call 7172

GWM, 35, professional, attractive,
warm, muscular, holry, seeks partner in
crime for relationship of passion, hon-
esty, adventure and serious fun. Be un-
der 32, warm, masculine, attractive, un-
der 5'10. 7480

GWM 35, successful attractive sincere
with good sense of humor looking for
possible tennis partner and long time
companion. Please have similar quali-
ties and interests. L.I. preferred.
7548

GWM 36 5'7 135, BR/BR enjoys walk-
ing, jazz/big band/disco, swimming,
flea markets, dogs, coffee & cigarettes.
You are GWM 32-42 Mtn clean-shaven
beyond "straight-acting", creative. Hair
+/- ok. X drugs, lean 5'-8" 7725

GWM 36 5'7 140 cute boyish hrl-ori-
ental looking for true romantic mascu-
line very passionate individual who is
daring, unconventional but classy, edu-
cated, into art, health conscious, in
shape for discovering love's true mean-

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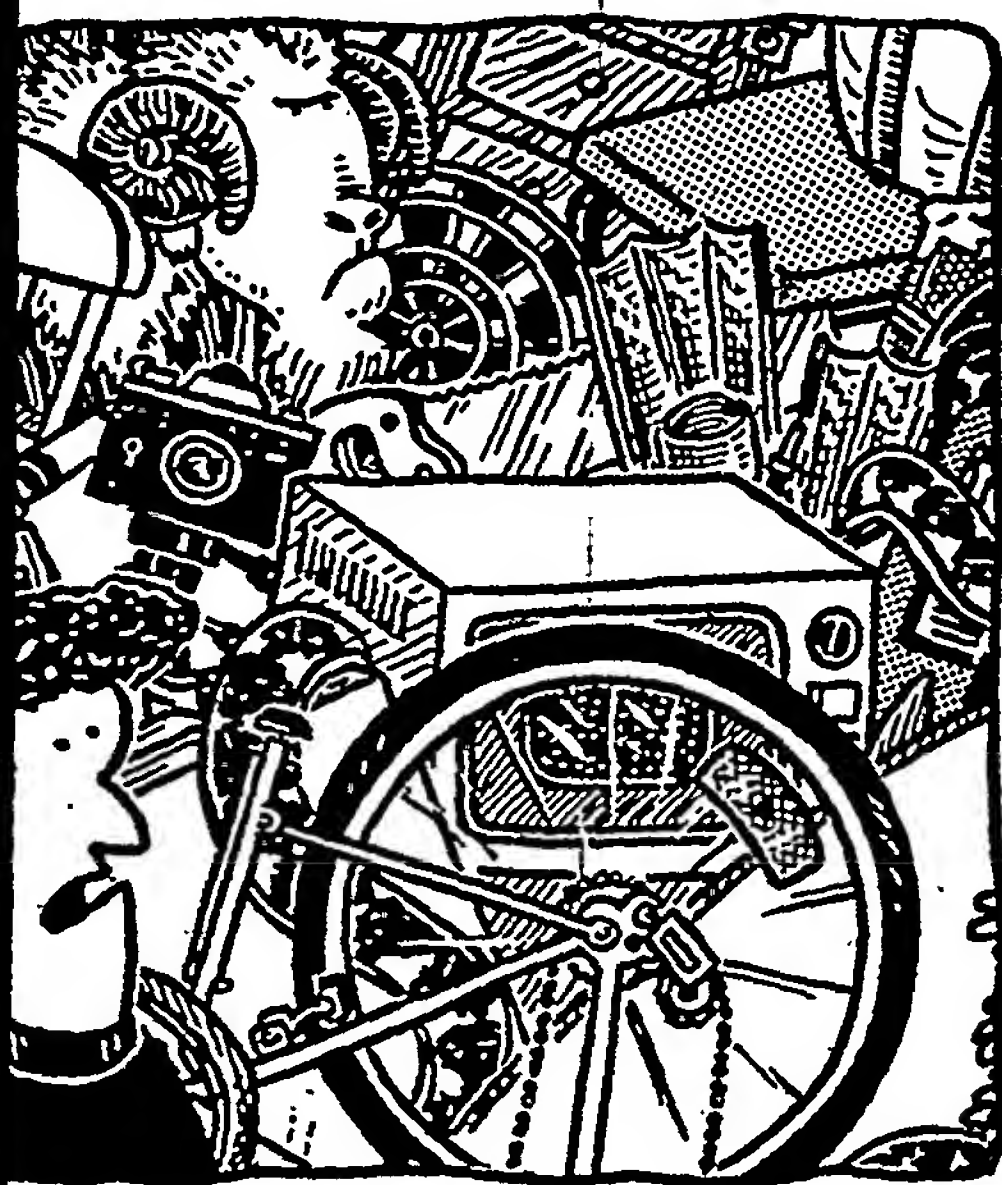
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VOICE

ean island of Dominica: By October, he
told his rapt listeners, he would be named
state security minister of that country, at
which point Dominica would become an
offshore center for the rebuilding of Ku-
wait. He warned Casolaro that this was all
very dangerous.

Nichols told Casolaro about his contacts
with the subterranean world of the Illumi-
nati. "I'm afraid of them," he said, accord-
ing to Casolaro's notes, "because I know
them. I lived in a hole. They gave me an
exit." Casolaro rushed to the library the
next day and copied passages in longhand
on secret societies: The Illuminati was an
18th century secret society whose members
achieved "illumination" through the study
of rationalistic philosophy and the human-
ities; it spread throughout Germany and
France and, in 1786, it was crushed by the
Roman Catholic Church. For decades, the
Illuminati has been used by the far right to
explain sprawling conspiracy theories.

Whatever Casolaro's relationship with
Nichols, it was sufficiently close for the
writer to include Nichols in the short list
given to his real estate agent of those who
were to be granted the right of first refusal
in the sale of his property.

Like any investigative reporter disap-
pearing down the rabbit hole of Iran-contra
or the October Surprise, Danny Casolaro
had entered a world of shadowy grudges
and wispy suspicions that are often difficult
to follow, much less prove. But there is
some indication that Casolaro was interest-
ed in these people from a novelist's view-
point, and not a reporter's—as if he were
working up a fictional account of the con-
spiratorial mind. His quick trip to the li-
brary surely must have revealed that the
Illuminati did not exist, at least not in the
sense that Nichols meant. And last summer
he told one friend that, while he liked the
LaRouchies, he thought their investigations
were sloppy and unreliable.

And, in a way, all that was a warm-up for
one of the last web-spinners that Casolaro
got to know, William Richard Turner.
Turner was an aerospace engineer for Hon-
eywell in northern Virginia until his divi-
sion was acquired by Hughes Aircraft.
Turner claims that he detected fraud on the
part of Hughes, and reported this to superi-
ors who covered it up (the company has
denied the charge). Turner—who had a
house a half-hour's drive from Martins-
burg—contacted Casolaro and gave him
the names of Department of Defense inves-
tigators who he said were ignoring his
reports.

In subsequent meetings, both in Fairfax
and in Winchester, Virginia, the two men
developed what Turner describes as a
friendship that grew out of Turner's alleged
knowledge of how the Promis software was
stolen. Turner left Hughes in April 1991,
just as Casolaro was getting into the Octo-
pus.

"Danny referred to the tentacles running
out from this Inslaw case," Turner said. He
claimed he often kept materials Casolaro
wanted secure in his [Turner's] safe. And at
some point in early August, Turner and
Casolaro agreed to meet in Martinsburg,
where Turner said he would turn over doc-
uments that would "prove a vast govern-
ment conspiracy."

LOOKING FOR DANNY

Sometime last summer Danny Casolaro
drew up a list of more than 100 friends he
wanted to invite to a big get-together in the
Virginia countryside. "When the Advance
Comes," he wrote at the top and, with his
trademark flourish, "ROAST PIG—SUMMER
PARTY." When the money came he would
depart on a round-the-world investigative
trip, then settle down to write the book, but
before all that he wanted to throw a party.
That was typical of Casolaro. But there was
no advance—and there was to be no party.

For an investigative reporter, his life was
remarkably simple. He hated to travel and
seldom did. Casolaro's professional life ex-
isted on the telephone, sometimes during
the day, more often at night. Every day

inevitably began with a telephone call from
Bill Hamilton at 7:30 in the morning for
the latest turn in the Inslaw case and the
Octopus. Then he'd head into Washington
for a congressional hearing or a meeting
with, for example, Danny Sheehan of the
Christic Institute—whose "Secret Team"
could just as easily have been called the
Octopus—or with the mayor of Chinatown.
In the afternoons he would work at home.
For dinner, he'd join Ann Klenk, a CNBC
producer who works with Jack Anderson,
and her seven-year-old daughter, Kate, for
meat loaf and mashed potatoes at their
home, or eat out at restaurants like Pied du
Cochon in Georgetown or AV's—both
places 1960s survivors.

His friends made a disparate group, ev-
erything from an advertising man to a real
estate agent to a writer for the *Washington
Times*. Ann was the one professional jour-
nalist among them. His lovers invariably

"He said to me,
'You know, he's
been embalmed.'
This was Monday. I
said, what? You're
kidding. How did
that happen? He
said, 'I don't know.
Weren't you
asked?'"

became his friends, and he made a special
point of introducing his old girlfriends to
one another and including them in his
tight-knit circle. The women all adored
him. Saturdays he'd call friends, and have
an impromptu party with roast chicken and
wine. He'd play the piano (he loved Tom
Waits and Elvis Costello). He read volumi-
nously, and was a great admirer of Ernest
Hemingway; he also read Lawrence Fer-
linghetti, Walt Whitman, and Jack
Kerouac.

Casolaro's family and friends were suspi-
cious about his unexpected death not only
because he was always talking about the
"danger" of his investigation, but also be-
cause all through the week before he went
to Martinsburg, he seemed to be breaking
his usual habits—he didn't return phone
calls, and more often than not they couldn't
find him at his usual haunts. The following
day-by-day chronology of the week leading
up to his visit to Martinsburg gives some
sense of why they became so worried.

Sunday, August 4: Casolaro spent most of
the day at real estate agent Danielle Stal-
lings's pool party. She is among his oldest
and closest friends; in recent months Dani-
elle had been trying to subdivide his prop-
erty. The sale of the Fairfax lots might have
provided him with a source of income to
continue his research on the book and take
the long trip. Danielle remembered that
Casolaro was worried about threats to his
life, and he told her he had persuaded his
brother John, who had been living with
him, to move to the house of another rela-
tive. At the party, Casolaro told Danielle,
"You just wouldn't believe what I'm in-
volved in."

Monday, August 5: Olga, the housekeeper
who had taken care of Casolaro and his
son, Trey, since his marriage broke up a
decade ago, stopped by the house. Olga is a
survivor of Dachau; though she's been in
the United States since 1952, her English is
less than perfect. (Olga tends to talk in
simple declarative sentences—"He always
happy man," she insisted. "He smiled. I
don't see any depressed. He not suicide. No

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way. He cut his finger—he's scared of his own blood.") Occasionally, Olga's memory can be erratic, but she claims to remember that Monday fairly clearly.

"About noon I came by and stuck my head in the doorway," Olga recalled. "Daniel was with man in kitchen. He was a heavy man sitting in the chair with his back to the door. He was wearing a dark suit. He was a dark man with black hair—he turned towards the door, I saw he was dark-skinned. I told the police maybe he could be from India."

Later that day Casolaro phoned Bill McCoy, a retired army CID officer who is a private investigator in Fairfax, Virginia. Casolaro told McCoy more about the Octopus, and described conversations with Jonathan Beaty at *Time* magazine and an article that they had assigned him to write about the Octopus. He told McCoy that Little, Brown & Co. and its parent company, Time-Warner, were willing to support his work. He said he had finally boiled the Octopus down to seven people who had started out as idealists, but turned bad along the way; he said he would travel to Arkansas, Texas, Arizona, California, and southeast Asia as soon as the advance came through. He said he was working with Jack Anderson's office. "From his tone, which was misplaced exuberance," McCoy remembered, "he wasn't getting to the nub of it."

In fact, Casolaro had no assignment from *Time*, nor any indication of support from Little, Brown or Time-Warner. And while he had friends who worked for Jack Anderson, he was never working with the columnist.

McCoy remembered another call, this one from Bob Bickel, a Texas oil engineer who worked as an informant for the Customs Bureau and is best known for his claim that Bush nominee for CIA director Robert Gates facilitated weapons shipments to Iraq in 1988 and 1989. Bickel told McCoy that Casolaro had called to say that he was getting close to the source, and he would soon go to Martinsburg and bring back the head of the Octopus.

That same day Riconosciuto called Bill Hamilton from his jail in Tacoma. He wanted some information about a former Justice Department attorney, and warned Hamilton that getting the information might be dangerous. Hamilton called Casolaro to help him find out about the attorney.

An old friend of Casolaro's, Ben Mason, called to consult on the writer's financial problems. They agreed that the best solution would be if the advance came through; otherwise, Casolaro said, he would have to borrow from his family, as he had often done before.

Casolaro's brother Tony, a successful doctor in the Washington area, remembered seeing Casolaro that Monday. "You look kinda tired," Tony recalled telling his brother. "He said, 'I get these calls in the middle of the night sometimes and it's hard to go back to sleep.' I knew what he meant because I had seen him two weeks before, and he told me he had been getting odd phone calls for about three months."

That evening, Casolaro met Ann Klenk at Hunter's Bar in Oakton. He told her he had been out to West Virginia. "I just broke the Inslaw case," he told her in disgust, "and you can have it."

Tuesday, August 6: Casolaro had been typing steadily since Monday, and by this afternoon he'd finished. Olga helped him pack a black leather tote bag, a Christmas gift from Wendy Weaver, a former girlfriend, and she remembered him packing a thick sheaf of papers into a dark brown or black briefcase. She tried to pick it up, and recalls saying to him, "Ooh, it's heavy. What have you got in there Danny?" And he replied, "I have all my papers. . . . Wish me luck, I'll see you in a couple of days." He put his arm around Olga and gave her a squeeze. She crossed her fingers in the good luck sign. This is the last time Olga saw Casolaro alive.

Later, Casolaro called Ann Klenk and

had her a summary of the travel itinerary for his book research. He proposed to go to 15 countries on five continents in less than two months, from Florida to Dominica, from Denver to Costa Rica, and then on to Chile, Australia, Laos, Kuwait, and Brussels, winding up with a visit to former CIA agent Ed Wilson at the K Unit in Marion Penitentiary in Illinois.

Wednesday, August 7: According to Inslaw records, Casolaro called the Hamiltons in the afternoon, and was put on hold. Before Bill Hamilton could get free, he had hung up. Casolaro never told the Hamiltons he was going to Martinsburg or that he had broken the Inslaw case.

Ben Mason arrived at Casolaro's about 3:30 p.m. "I was real hungry and anxious to go get something to eat," he recalled, "but he was taking his time, as usual. He took me downstairs, pulled out a box, and showed me some papers. Five separate pages, spread them out on the floor. The first had something to do with some arms deals. I remember the name Khashoggi. It was about Iran-contra." The second and third pages were photocopies of checks, made out for \$1 million and \$4 million; they were photocopies of checks drawn on BCCI accounts held by Adnan Khashoggi, the international arms merchant and factotum for the House of Saud, and by Manucher Ghorbanifar, the arms dealer and Iran-contra middleman. All these documents have been passed around in the investigative community since at least 1987. "The last sheet," Mason continued, "was a passport photo of some guy named Ibrahim."

"Now don't get these out of order," Mason says Casolaro told him. Casolaro emphasized that Ibrahim had made a big deal of showing his Egyptian passport, and spoke as if he had met him. "These guys flash their passports like we do a driver's license," he told Mason.

The passport picture is of Hassan Ali Ibrahim Ali, born in 1928. He is identified as the manager of Sitico, an alleged Iraqi front company for arms purchases. In searching through Casolaro's papers after his death, Doug Vaughan found he had gotten these pages from Bob Bickel, who in turn got them from October Surprise source and self-proclaimed CIA asset Richard Brenneke.

Casolaro showed Mason a 22-point outline for his book, and told him he was really discouraged at having been tied up with an agent who wasn't able to sell it for the last 18 months. Now he was dreading having to find a new one.

Some time on Wednesday, Riconosciuto called Hamilton again to ask for the information about the Justice Department lawyer. Hamilton called Casolaro, but he wasn't home.

About 6 p.m., Casolaro called his good friend Art Weinfeld, but never mentioned Martinsburg; Art asked whether there was any word on the advance. There wasn't.

Thursday, August 8: Ann Klenk called, but got no answer. Casolaro called Danielle Stalling and asked her to set up appointments for him the next week with a former police officer, now employed as a private investigator, to learn more about the Lao-tian warlord Kuhn Sa's proposed Golden Triangle drug trade from his Asian stepmother.

Later that morning, Casolaro dropped by the office of his insurance agent, Jim Kelly, and paid up the insurance policy on his house.

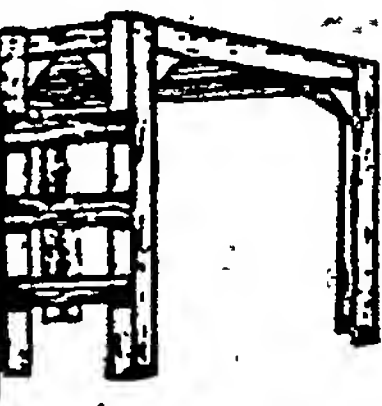
Friday, August 9: By now Bill Hamilton was starting to worry. "I talk to Danny almost every day," Hamilton said. "I had never [gone without speaking to him for so long] before, so I called Bob Nichols in Los Angeles and asked whether he had heard from Danny recently."

"He said, 'Yes, he called late Monday night. Danny sounded like the cat who had swallowed the canary. He was euphoric. I have probably had 50 hours of telephone conversations with him in the last year; he always plays chess with me on the phone. Danny told me he had just come back from

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meeting with a source, and he now knew everything about Inslaw and Promis, and the Hamiltons were going to be very excited. He was going back for a final meeting Tuesday. I said, 'I haven't heard from him for a few days. It's not like Danny.' Nichols said he was taking off for Europe that evening.

Then Hamilton called Wendy Weaver to find out if she knew where he was. Wendy didn't know, but she promised to find out.

By now, Ann Klenk was also worried. Her television program had done a live shot of former air force general and Ollie North sidekick Richard Secord the night before; Casolaro knew they were going to talk to Secord, and he'd certainly want to know what happened. Why didn't he call? She phoned Hunter's and asked if anyone had seen him. Nobody had.

Meanwhile, Olga, the housekeeper, was taking care of Casolaro's house. She claimed to remember four or five telephone calls that day. The first was at about 9 a.m., a man's voice, "good English," she says, and it sounded far away. The voice said, "I will cut his body and throw it to the sharks." About half an hour to an hour later, there was a second call. This voice, also a man's, had no accent, but she thinks it was a different person's. "Drop dead," he said, and hangs up. "You drop dead," Olga remembers saying back. There was a third call. No voice, just music, as if from a radio in the background. Olga remembers saying into the phone, "Don't call him no more." The fourth call was the same. Olga left the house before dark. She returned at night and turned on the porch light, thinking Casolaro would be returning soon. At 10 p.m. there was a fifth call. Again, no voice, and this time no background noise either. Olga slammed the phone down.

Sometime between 5 p.m. and 6 p.m. Casolaro placed a collect call to his mother's home in McClean, where the family expected him for dinner. His niece answered the phone; she later recalled that Casolaro said something about having been in Pennsylvania, but she doesn't remember this clearly. He told his mother he would be late, if he showed up at all, and not to wait for him.

Saturday, August 10: Wendy Weaver called Ann Klenk and told her Bill Hamilton was worried about Casolaro. Ann was now thoroughly alarmed, and she paged Dr. Tony Casolaro, Danny's brother, at the suburban Virginia hospital where he works. She was relieved to hear about what Tony described as a call from Pennsylvania Friday evening.

Wendy Weaver called Hamilton and told him Casolaro had been in Pennsylvania and was on the way back. About midmorning, Olga heard the phone ring in Casolaro's house: when she picked up the receiver, there was no voice and no background noise.

At 8:30 that evening, Olga returned to Casolaro's house to look for him. The phone rang. A man's voice said, "You son of a bitch. You're dead."

Sunday, August 11: Hamilton called Casolaro's house and got no answer.

Sometime after 4 p.m. Dan Bischoff, the national affairs editor at the *Village Voice*, received an anonymous phone call from a man who said the paper should look into the disappearance of a reporter investigating the October Surprise in West Virginia. Bischoff sent a computer message to *Voice* editor-in-chief Jonathan Larsen, informing him of the tip.

Ann Klenk stopped by Casolaro's house that evening. "It was so still, so empty," she remembered. "It was just dead. I yelled for him and no one was there." She left a note: "Danny—where the hell are you? I'm worried about you."

Monday, August 12: Bill Hamilton began the day with yet another call to Casolaro's house. Again no answer.

Martinsburg police detective Sergeant George Swartwood called Danny Casolaro's mother's house and told the family that Casolaro was dead, an apparent suicide. By the middle of that day, National Public

Radio was broadcasting the first reports about Casolaro's mysterious death and the Octopus. At 10:30 that morning, Hamilton learned from Ann Klenk that Casolaro was dead.

This is how Tony Casolaro remembers that day: "My mother was first called about 9:30 on Monday morning. She called me within 20 minutes. When I spoke to [Swartwood], he said, 'We found your brother at the Sheraton in Martinsburg. It looks like he committed suicide.' And I said, 'Well, how did he do it?' And he said, 'We're not sure yet. We found some broken glass, and we found a razor and his arms were cut.' I said, you mean wrists? And he said, 'Yeah, wrists and arms.' I said, 'Did you know he was a reporter working on a story?' He said, 'No. What are you talking about?'"

"I said he told me four weeks ago if he got killed in an accident not to believe it

His friends thought he was unrealistic about the advance. Ann Klenk told him, "You're not going to get this money." I saw him obsessed with this book. I wanted him to get a job."

because he was threatened. He said, 'Oh.' I said, 'Did you find any of his papers?' He had all these papers with him. He said, 'I don't think we found any papers.' I said, 'Are you going to do an autopsy?' He said, 'No, I don't think so.'

"And then he sort of stepped back and said I ought to talk to the medical examiner. I said, 'Who decided not to [conduct an autopsy]? He said the coroner, Sandra Brining. I didn't think of all the things I should have asked him at the time.'

After talking to Sandra Brining, Tony Casolaro finally got through to Dr. James Frost in the West Virginia medical examiner's office. Frost said he would conduct an autopsy on Wednesday.

"I told him the whole method of death even if he were going to commit suicide... I'm not going to say he never would. You never say that. Anybody could," Tony Casolaro continued. "But I said if you look at the person, if you look at how enthusiastic he was and you look at the method of dying—Danny didn't like needles. He wouldn't come back and let his cholesterol be checked by my partner, who is his doctor, because he didn't like needles. He was supposed to have a treadmill done about a year ago: he got there and they told him they wanted to do a stress Valium test, where they put a needle in his arm. He said forget it and left. My partner was really mad at him. He said, 'You're not going to put any needles in my arm.'

"And Frost said, 'Well, you know, that is kinda curious. We'll go ahead and do the autopsy and we'll see.'

"[Then] he said to me, 'You know, he's been embalmed.' This was Monday afternoon. I said what? You're kidding. How did that happen? He said, 'I don't know.' I said is that something that's standard? He said 'No. It's quite atypical. It's against the law, in fact. Weren't you asked?' I said no. 'Well, then, I don't quite know. Maybe Ms. Brining authorized it. [Brining said she released the body to the funeral home because she regarded it as a suicide.] But really they're supposed to notify the family first.' I said, 'Well, I can guarantee you

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nobody asked us.' I said doesn't that impede your autopsy? 'Well,' he said, 'it makes it more difficult.' Those were his exact words."

After talking with Tony Casolaro, George Swartwood sent officers to interview hotel employees and pull records; detectives were dispatched to local bars and restaurants with a photo of Casolaro from his driver's license to find out where he had been. Swartwood asked Sandra Brining to call Deputy Chief State Medical Examiner Dr. James Frost.

At the Sheraton, the police returned to Room 517 for a more thorough, if belated, search. The room had been vacant since the body was discovered. The police gathered fibers for analysis. They lifted fingerprints from the mirror and edge of the counter of the vanity in the bathroom. They rechecked the door and windows for any sign of forced entry. One officer went up on the roof to look for footprints or marks to see if someone could have rappelled down the outside wall to Room 517, which is on the top floor. Hotel records show that Casolaro had made no telephone calls from his room. Another officer checked Interstate 81 with a dog for any sign of Casolaro's papers.

That night, Robert Booth Nichols called Tony Casolaro, expressed his condolences, and said he had been in London for three days.

THE POLICE ACCOUNT

Martinsburg is a tourist center (the Civil War battle of Antietam was fought nearby), and it's not far from trailheads for the Appalachian Trail. The local construction industry is busy with recreation homes and condos, and as a growing bedroom community for Washington, Martinsburg and the nearby towns have become a major source of tax revenue for the state. Not far away, just across the low foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, lies Camp David, the presidential retreat, and Camp Ritchie, where the Pentagon has dug huge underground headquarters for use during a nuclear attack. The Forest Rangers who patrol the tops of the hills hereabouts are drawn from army intelligence units.

For all that, there's nothing to suggest that the Martinsburg cops and the local fire department's emergency medical team were anything other than what they appear to be—aggressive, professional suburban public servants. In interviews with the Martinsburg police, we have reconstructed the 72 hours between Casolaro's arrival in the town and his death; and we have confirmed this account independently, in separate interviews, with the same witnesses.

Casolaro registered at the Sheraton a little before noon Thursday. Soon after, he showed up at the Stone Crab Inn, a restaurant located one stop north off I-81. There he drank a bottle of wine. He stayed for about three hours, according to the bartender who served him. About 3 p.m. he went to a Pizza Hut near the Sheraton and ordered a pitcher of beer. Told by the waitress that alcoholic beverages could not be served without food, he ordered a pizza, too. He quoted from *The Great Gatsby*, and said he was a member of the Edgar Allan Poe Society, she recalled. He sat in a booth by himself for a half hour or so, then left.

Sometime around 5 p.m., Casolaro entered Heatherfield's, the cocktail lounge at the Sheraton, with another man described by a waitress as "maybe Arab or Iranian." The waitress remembered because the foreign-seeming man rudely complained about slow service. Casolaro told her, "Don't pay any attention. He's had a hard day." They had about four beers each. The other man paid in cash.

About 5:30 p.m., Casolaro returned to the bar for a bucket of ice because the ice machine on his floor was broken. Another barmaid had come on duty, and she recognized him from an earlier encounter: she told police she thought it was in January, but Casolaro's credit card receipts suggest it was February 22, when he also had drinks

at Heatherfield's.

As Casolaro walked down the hall toward his room with the ice bucket, another guest in the hotel said, "It's a hell of a note when you have to walk all the way to Virginia to get a bucket of ice." That man, Mike Looney, had the room next door to Casolaro's. About 8 p.m., Looney went downstairs to the bar and spotted Casolaro talking to two women, both blonds clad in tights. Another regular customer also saw the trio. When the two women left, Looney remarked, "It looked too good to be true." Casolaro laughed ruefully, and the two started a conversation that, punctuated by drinks, went over the scandals and controversies Casolaro had been working on. Looney was intrigued, but he had a hard time believing there were just seven or eight men responsible for four decades of scandals.

"He said he was here to meet an important source who was going to give him what he needed to solve the case," Looney recalled later. "It seems like he said the guy was an Arab." This source was supposed to arrive about 9 p.m., but as the appointed hour came and went, Casolaro grew embarrassed. At one point he left the lounge to make a call. Or at least Looney *thought* he was going to make a call. Maybe he just



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As Casolaro walked down the hall toward his room with the ice bucket, another guest at the hotel said, "It's a hell of a note when you have to walk all the way to Virginia to get a bucket of ice." That man, Mike Looney, had the room next door to Casolaro's. About 8 p.m., Looney went downstairs to the bar and spotted Casolaro talking to two women, both blonds clad in tights. Another regular customer also saw the trio. When the two women left, Looney remarked, "It looked too good to be true." Casolaro laughed ruefully, and the two started a conversation that, punctuated by drinks, went over the scandals and controversies Casolaro had been working on. Looney was intrigued, but he had a hard time believing there were just seven or eight men responsible for four decades of scandals.

"He said he was here to meet an important source who was going to give him what he needed to solve the case," Looney recalled later. "It seems like he said the guy was an Arab." This source was supposed to arrive about 9 p.m., but as the appointed hour came and went, Casolaro grew embarrassed. At one point he left the lounge to make a call. Or at least Looney *thought* he was going to make a call. Maybe he just

went to the bathroom.

When Casolaro returned a few minutes later, he ordered another beer. He seemed more subdued and admitted, somewhat sheepishly, that his source might have blown him off. But it didn't matter because "he was only there to get some travel documents. That's why he didn't mind getting drunk." They stayed until the last call, about 11:30 p.m., both Looney and the bartender said.

So far, no one has come forward to say where Casolaro was from midnight through noon Friday.

About 2:30 p.m., Casolaro came bounding out to a car parked outside the Sheraton and greeted his friend Bill Turner. "Danny called me Tuesday and said he'd be in the Martinsburg area on Friday," Turner would later recall in an interview. "He said he'd be up there at the Sheraton and meet me in the parking lot, because he was afraid the room was bugged. So I was there about three o'clock, and he came bouncing up with that famous old smile of his and opened the car door and got in. He said we couldn't have dinner together because he had a couple of more appointments. When he came up to the car he had some papers under his arm. I've never seen him carry a

briefcase. He always carried just shit. I've never seen him carry anything but a file folder, like an accordion file.

"I gave him some papers. And he said he had to go. He said he was going to wrap everything up by the first of the week and he would get back in touch with me. His last words to me were, 'Bill old buddy, you got to watch your p's and q's and look over your shoulder.'"

After his brief meeting with Turner, Casolaro went to the Stone Crab. There he had a shrimp cocktail and drank beer from 3 p.m. until paying with a credit card at 5:12, according to the cash register invoice. He seemed lonely and depressed, a bartender told the police. He mentioned he had a "rough night," but when he left he stopped at a pay phone to make the collect call to his mother's home, spoke to his niece, said something about having been in Pennsylvania, and told his mother he would be late, if he showed up at all.

That was the last his family and friends heard from him. Sometime after 10 p.m., he went into a convenience store near the Sheraton and waited for the clerk to brew a fresh pot of coffee. He sipped on the coffee, walking back toward the Sheraton. That was the last time anyone—at least anyone

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THE VILLAGE **VOICE**

who's willing to talk—saw him alive. Looney, a man in the room next door, told both *the Voice* and the police that he had gone to bed early Friday night, about 9:30, but stayed awake reading a book until around midnight. He heard nothing unusual in Casolaro's room next door. Looney said he woke in the morning and left the hotel about 8 a.m.

A family in the room on the other side of Casolaro's, in town for a soccer tournament, told police they too heard nothing unusual.

The maids discovered the body around 12:30 p.m. Saturday. Two patrol cars from the Martinsburg police department arrived at the Sheraton within minutes, followed by an emergency medical unit headed by Lieutenant Dave Brining of the city's fire department. Brining's wife, Sandra, a nurse who works in the city hospital emergency room and doubles as the county coroner, arrived at 1:02 p.m. The paramedics removed the bathroom door from its hinges so they would have more room to work. Sandy Brining drained the water from the tub. (No screen was placed in the drain to prevent tiny debris from draining away; nor was a sample of the bathwater saved.) When Dave Brining lifted the body out of the tub, they found the beer can, the paper coaster, and the razor blade.

As the paramedics worked, the police were photographing and examining the scene. There were no signs of forced entry, no signs of a struggle. They found four more razor blades in their envelopes in a small packet.

While they were working in Room 517 at the Sheraton the hotel received a call for Danny Casolaro. The police returned the call and got a beeper. They left a message on the beeper, but got no return call. Tracing the beeper through the manufacturer, they found it was owned by Bill Turner.

In their interviews with hotel employees, they learned that Casolaro had registered on Thursday, August 8, using a credit card. No one had seen or heard or reported anything suspicious. Rather than call his home and risk disturbing his family with the bad news, the police adopted the standard procedure of contacting the hometown police department, which then dispatched an officer to notify the family in person. The Fairfax County police said they'd take care of it.

The Brinings took the body to the Brown Funeral Home, where the director, Charles Brown, had a well-lit room equipped with a table for examining cadavers. Sometimes bodies are examined at the hospital—usually when an individual arrives dead or dies there—but taking the body to the funeral home eliminated an extra step. The Brinings then conducted their initial examination.

The dead man appeared to be in good health. The cuts on his wrists were deep and firm: three, possibly four, on the left arm, and seven or eight on the right. Sandra Brining took a blood sample from the heart cavity by inserting the needle of a syringe (it took two pokes, leaving two needle marks). There were no other recent marks on the body save a small bruise, at least several days old, on the inside of the victim's upper right arm. She also noted a long scar running from the inside of the right thigh down the leg and calf, possibly from surgery in the past, and another old scar near the hairline on his forehead. No other sign of trauma, nothing at all to indicate a struggle. Sandra Brining fixed the cause of death as desanguination from multiple lacerations self-inflicted to the wrist—that is, he bled to death—and released the body to the funeral home, which has a cooler for the storage of bodies pending notification of the next of kin.

Charles Brown then decided to embalm the body that night and go home, rather than come back to work the next day, Sunday.

Sunday evening the Martinsburg police got together for a party. Detective Sergeant George Swartwood asked, "Hey, did the guys in Fairfax get ahold of the Casolaro

family?" No one knew. "If there's no response from Fairfax," Swartwood said, "I'm going to call them myself tomorrow morning."

AFTERMATH

By Tuesday, August 13, rumors were flying. Under the headline, "Police reopen case of dead BCCI writer," *The Washington Times* mistakenly reported "an artery in his upper arm [was] severed by a broken beer bottle." Having completed their investigation of the scene, the police released the room to the hotel, which called an industrial cleaning service to remove blood stains from the bathroom and clean the room. By now, however, the rumor mill had it that the room had been cleaned on Sunday, by the Mafia.

Following up on their unsuccessful attempt to reach Turner the day before, the Martinsburg police went to Winchester where, in the company of the Frederick County sheriffs, they drove out to Bill Turner's home. He wasn't there, so they left a card with his 13-year-old daughter, asking the engineer to call them in Winchester.

According to a police report, when they finally contacted Turner he admitted meeting Casolaro on the previous Friday afternoon, but refused to specify what time. He also claimed to have given Casolaro some papers, but he won't describe what's in them or provide copies to the police. He claimed he has been harassed by police.

When one of us phoned Turner in mid-August, seeking an interview, he said, "I've been getting paranoid over the last week and a half. I am willing to talk to anyone if they come to my house, but I warn you I will be armed."

During the interview, he recalled first meeting Casolaro a year and a half ago. "I consider him a good friend, a confidant." The two talked about the Octopus: "I know some things I'm scared shitless about, connecting Oliver North, BCCI. I saw papers from Danny that connected back through to the Keating Five and Silverado [the failed Denver S&L where Neil Bush had been an officer]. Back in May or June we met up in Inwood, West Virginia, and went to a couple of bars and had a few beers. We stopped at Piggy's and a couple of other places and shot the shit."

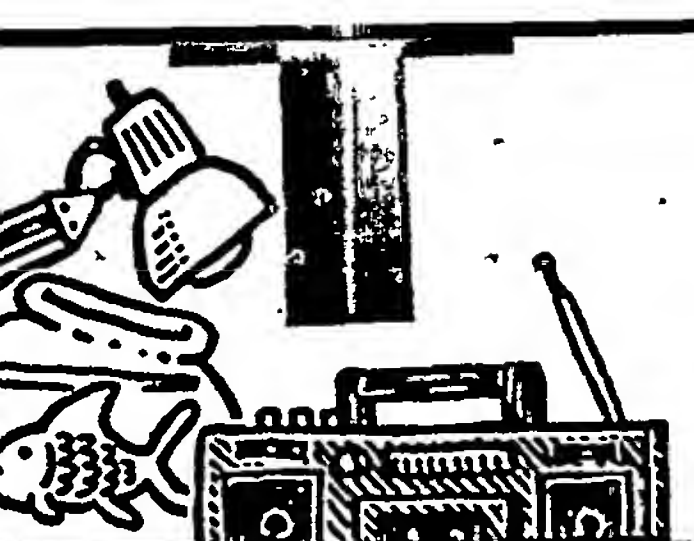
"He told me he was going to write a book, and if I'd ever get a hold of it I would be amazed. He was going to personally autograph it. He was going to call it *Cover-Up*, and later *The Octopus*. We would hash out the names. He was very thorough. He cross-checked everything to make sure he had his facts right. I know he was out here on I-81, bouncing up and down the corridor."

A search of credit card receipts, phone bills, and other records showed only one lunch with Turner on February 21, at the Sheraton, and a possible early meeting with Turner in June.

"When the cops showed up I assumed they knew from the papers Danny had on him that he had been meeting with me," Turner said. "They said I was uncooperative, but I told them on the phone I would be more than willing to talk with them about meeting with Danny on Friday. Swartwood said, 'I want a copy of those papers.' I said that had nothing to do with his death."

On Wednesday, August 14, Casolaro's body was taken to West Virginia University Hospital for an autopsy by Dr. Frost, who reaffirmed the initial findings of the county coroner that he died of loss of blood from cuts on the wrist. There were no bruises, contusions, or any other wounds suggesting a struggle or the use of a weapon, only the old bruise on the upper left arm and the old scar on his thigh. The only marks on the body were left by the needle used to extract the blood sample the night he died. There was no measurable alcohol in the blood.

A urine sample was taken from the bladder during the autopsy. Although it was slightly contaminated by formaldehyde from the embalming, it showed 0.04 per



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ent alcohol. Frost interpreted this to mean that Casolaro had probably stopped drinking the night before.

In his examination of the body, Dr. Frost found lesions within the brain that showed demyelination (deterioration of the sheath around the nervous tissue in the brain), characteristic of multiple sclerosis. "Based on the location of them," Frost said, "we think there probably could have been some ocular motor syndrome or disfunction—the eyes might deviate with a brief transient blurring of vision, pop right back in, something he might not have appreciated at all." Frost went on to downplay the possibility that this contributed to any possible suicide. He did not know how Casolaro had received the long scar on the inside of his thigh and the scar on his head.

Frost estimated the time of death as from one to four hours before the body was found, sometime between eight and 12 Saturday morning. "Rigor mortis was just beginning to establish itself. Using that and other factors, we think it was that morning. Exact hour, I don't know."

Blood and tissue samples were submitted to a toxicologist for further analysis, including a screening for 103 drugs and other substances. The wine bottle—Valencia red, a Portuguese vintage—and broken glass were tested for drug residues, and nothing was found. "There was nothing present in any way that could have incapacitated him so he would have been incapable of struggling with an assailant, let alone been sufficient to kill him," Frost said. The drug tests detected hydrocodone, which is found in some common painkillers and which, Frost said, "May have come from the empty Vicodine prescription bottle found by the police in his bag in the hotel room." The Vicodine had been prescribed in 1988 for root-canal pain. Frost also said Casolaro's insulin and blood sugar levels were checked. "There was no sign that someone shot him up with insulin so that he would go into shock." Acetaminophen was found in blood, urine, and the liver in trace amounts, suggesting he had taken Tylenol. A trace amount of tricyclic antidepressant was found in the blood and the urine, but in quantities too small to identify the specific drug.

The suicide note was sent to handwriting experts along with samples of Casolaro's known handwriting, and was found to be his.

Frost had enlarged photographs of the bathroom sent to an expert who specializes in blood spatters, to see if there was anything suspicious about the pattern. As the *Voice* goes to press, the results have not come back.

After the autopsy, Tony Casolaro again spoke with Frost. "I asked what he found—marks on his wrists? On his arms? No. I said the policeman thought there were marks on his arms. 'No, I didn't find them,' [Frost answered]. I found a bruise on one arm but I don't think that was significant. It was like it had been done the day before. It's not clear what it was from." I said, "Can you say whether these are self-inflicted or not?" He said, "You can't say. There were no hesitation marks." If you're going to cut your wrists, most people will see what it feels like, so they'll do it once or twice and see if it hurts, and go deeper each time. He said they were just through, each time. He said you could argue either that if someone else did it that would be their choice, or if they were absolutely intent on suicide, they wouldn't hesitate. He said it doesn't argue one way or the other. He was being pretty straight. I said, "OK."

One of the last remaining questions about Casolaro's death has to do with the toxicology report, whose validity in the wake of the embalming has always been a red flag for skeptics. "They found a trace amount of Vicodine, it's similar to codeine," Tony Casolaro said. "His dentist had given him six tablets in 1988. They said they found a bottle with none left in his duffle bag, and a trace amount in his bloodstream. But he couldn't have taken too many. And they said they didn't think

it could have had anything to do with his death.

"I don't know what that means. They *did* find traces of Tylenol in the bottle. They also found traces of a tricyclic, an antidepressant. Of the five or six things that bothered me the most, this is one of them. Because they found no pill bottle, no written prescription at any pharmacy. [Tricyclic is] prescribed by psychiatrists. I looked through his Blue Cross records—he hadn't seen anybody. Nobody stepped forward. It's not like there's any patient confidentiality when somebody's dead. I said, 'What did he do, have the pill in his pocket? Doesn't that bother you?' That's when they said, 'Yeah, a lot of things bother us about this case.'"

CURIOUSER AND CURIOUSER

There are still several unanswered questions about Danny Casolaro's death. How could a man who seemed so alive to his friends and family commit suicide? What happened to the briefcase Olga saw him pack? Where are the notes Bill Turner claims he gave Casolaro? Who is the Arab-looking man? Could he have been the source Casolaro went to Martinsburg to

meet?

By Wednesday, Dr. Frost's tautology, the woodwork in the hospital in identifying him a pay phone parking lot Saturday, down by a parking lot. "This morning, the caller said, 'Who's the caller?' " "Clark the caller said something OK. Who up.

One of the questions concerning Casolaro's death and family commitment suicide? What happened to the briefcase Olga saw him pack? Where are the notes Bill Turner claims he gave Casolaro? Who is the Arab-looking man? Could he have been the source Casolaro went to Martinsburg to

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WHO KILLED DANNY CASOLARO?

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meet?

By Wednesday, August 14, the day that Dr. Frost announced the result of the autopsy, the crazies started coming out of the woodwork. Tony Casolaro is paged at the hospital in the evening; the caller refuses to identify himself, but says he's phoning from a pay phone because he had been in the parking lot of the Sheraton about noon on Saturday, August 10, and was nearly run down by a car as it roared out of the parking lot. "It wasn't until I read the papers this morning that I realized who it was," the caller told Casolaro.

"Who was it?" Dr. Casolaro asked.

"Clark Clifford and Robert Altman," the caller said. Casolaro paused and waited for something more. Finally he said, "Uh huh, OK. Who was driving?" The caller hung up.

One of the strangest twists in the investigation came to light on September 4, when Casolaro's son Trey, his sister Mary Ellen, and family friend Art Weinfeld went to Martinsburg to pick up Casolaro's car. As they waited in the lobby of the police station, two men entered and asked the receptionist if they could talk to someone about the Casolaro case. The family introduced themselves, and the two men said they were

detectives from the Washington, D.C., National Airport Authority. The detectives said they were investigating the murder of Alan Standorf, a civilian employee at the Vint Hill Farm military reservation, which is run by the army for the National Security Agency outside Warrenton, Virginia.

In a later interview, the detectives explained that Standorf died of a blow to the head sometime around January 3, 1991. His body had been wrapped in his coat and stuffed in the back seat of his car, which was found at National Airport on January 28. Their investigation indicated he had withdrawn \$500 in cash from an automatic teller machine shortly before he died. No money was found with the body. A handgun was also missing. The detectives surmised Standorf was killed in the course of a robbery, then dumped at National. Because Standorf was employed at a restricted facility, an investigator from army intelligence spent two days with the airport detectives examining the evidence. They were also visited by an army intelligence officer who was looking for any sign that Standorf's death might have been related to his work as a low-level analyst. Although they could not locate a suspect, the case appeared to be a simple robbery—until someone called the

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THE ARGUMENT
FOR SUICIDE

Did Casolaro know he had MS, and if he did would that have made him commit suicide?

"He kept saying his head hurt," a close friend recalled about the last two years of his life. "He was in physical pain. He had real problems with his vision."

About 18 months ago a friend who was to have dinner with Casolaro found him in his house with a bloody towel wrapped around his head. In the bathroom there were three other blood-soaked towels. She immediately called the rescue squad, and after putting IVs in both arms, his condition stabilized and they took him to the hospital. Casolaro

late explained he had been lifting weights when the barbells had fallen, leaving a deep gash in his head.

In another mishap, Casolaro complained to a friend that he had been forced off Route 66. His fenders were smashed up, and he was cut and bruised.

Then, while house-sitting for a friend, he was attempting to fix a broken skylight when he fell and made a long gash in his right leg.

"For the last couple of years he thought he needed glasses," his brother Tony recalled. "Did he have any motor symptoms? The reason I sent him to have a physical a few years ago was because he had numbness in his foot. They couldn't find anything." When he complained to his brother about the numbness, Tony remembers joking with him, saying he had the symptoms of multiple sclerosis. "I teased him, 'You probably have MS.' He said, 'Don't say that.'"

"I really don't think he knew," Tony Casolaro said. He remembered one time his brother asked him, "If I get something bad, would you give me something?"

This last summer, Casolaro asked Art Weinfield's wife, Anne Marie, a nursing professor, about slow viruses, including MS. He had her repeat the explanation twice, and called her on the phone later with more questions. Danielle Stallings remembered that, though Casolaro had always seemed in perfect health, he had trouble swimming laps in her pool this last year.

He complained to a friend of pressure in his head and pain in his elbow, and said, "I have never been the same since that bump on my head." Another friend who pestered him to stop researching and get down to writing the book remembers him telling her not long ago, "You know, I really can't write. I physically can't do it. I'm not ready yet."

But Ann Klenk doesn't believe it. "He was strong, built like a brick shithouse. Up 20 hours a day. Danny used to be a boxer."

Some have speculated that money problems could have put him over the edge. But this seems unlikely. "He never had any money," one friend recalled, "but he always knew he could get it." His family had money, and stood ready to make loans. His efforts to subdivide and sell his house and five acres of property in Fairfax had been stymied by the collapse of real estate prices, but Danielle Stallings was nearing the completion of arrangements that would allow partial subdivision of the property. None of his friends think money was a real problem for Casolaro.

There were signs, however, that he was tiring of the search for the Octopus. Art Weinfield remembered him turning away from the idea of an exposé and more toward a fictionalized version of events. Casolaro also began to look for work, making inquiries of with a private investigator, and trying to land a job with Jack Anderson. His friends thought he was being unrealistic about investigative journalism and the book advance. Ann Klenk told him, "You're not going to get this money." I saw him obsessed with this book. I wanted him to get a job."

Still, many of his friends—and many reporters working on the same conspiratorial beat—believe he was murdered. How could Danny Casolaro have been murdered? Here's one scenario:

Someone knocks on the door. Casolaro answers and gets sprayed with some exotic chemical, say a synthetic version of curare, the paralyzing agent used on the tips of South American blow darts. He falls unconscious. His wrists are cut and he is left to bleed to death.

But then, how to explain the note, in his own hand? Perhaps the person that enters his room threatens to kill his mother or son if he does not write the note. But in that case, the note probably would betray signs of stress, a tremor in the handwriting. Those who believe it was murder cite the phrase "God will let me in" as a cryptic code suggesting he was being forced to sign; Other friends say they recognized the

phrase from Casolaro's own short stories. Proponents of a murder plot say his strict Catholic upbringing would have made suicide unthinkable.

It's possible, but remember, the more elaborate the plot, the trickier the cover-up. Everyone, even an outlaw, has to obey Murphy's Law. That's why the rule for professional hit men is "keep it simple." Philosophers call this principle Occam's Razor: before developing a more complicated theory to explain the phenomenon under study, cut down the number of variables to the minimum necessary and sufficient.

And why Casolaro? Dozens of reporters have explored the same terrain Casolaro was investigating. And Casolaro had never written an article on the Octopus for any publication.

"He was such an innocent person," a friend said. "He could not see evil. I never heard him say a bad thing about anyone."

She paused. "Either way the story killed him."

Shortly before he died Danny Casolaro, a man who seemed to be surrounded by the best-looking blonds in all Virginia, renewed a friendship with a young woman he had known off and on for several years. They spent long nights in his house, drinking wine, reciting poetry. As with all his other friends, Casolaro spoke of his love for his divorced wife, Terrell. The woman remembered how excited he was about the book, telling her the advance of \$33,000 was on the way. The young woman thrilled to his tales of the world of the Octopus. He spoke to her of the dangers, the threats—"If I'm not here, you know what happened"—of his plans to depart on the first leg of a round-the-world investigative trip. He would go to Mexico on a motorcycle, a Black Shadow, then travel to Laos, drug

capital of the world, where he would be under special protection. In the fall they would meet in Paris, where years ago he had gone to school.

He told her about Danger Man, talked of the October Surprise, and played the piano. He never slept, except early in the morning. She loved motorcycles, and begged to go with him, at least to Mexico.

"You can't go with me," he told her. "It's too dangerous."

When she stayed over and had no clothes for a party the next day, he went out to Lord & Taylor to buy her a swimsuit and some shoes. He told her how he even got Susan Sarandon's sister, who works at Lord & Taylor, to help him pick out the suit.

He wanted to introduce her to a friend of his who was just flying into Washington from Kuwait, a place she longed to visit. This man was a special friend, he told her, the president of the legendary Bechtel Cor-

poration. The man, of course, was Bob Nichols, and they were to meet at Washington's posh Four Seasons for drinks. But she couldn't make the meeting.

Casolaro planned a rendezvous with her at a Virginia bar the Sunday before he died. She stood him up. Casolaro tried to phone her to no avail.

What he did not know—but what no doubt would have delighted him—was that she had stood him up for a more exotic date: the cousin of the Emir of Kuwait had whisked her away on a two-week party along the East Coast.

After waiting longer than he should have, Danny Casolaro finally left the bar, alone. He never saw her again. Ever the romantic, he left a bouquet of roses beside his empty glass.

Research assistance by Keith Campbell, Curtis Lang, Lucette Lagnado

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